



HOUSE BILL 198

Food Stamp Program Eligibility
Rep. Andrew Gray

BACKGROUND

- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits are crucial to Alaskan food security. One out of nine Alaskans depend on food stamps to feed their families.
- In 2022, Alaska made national headlines when a backlog of thousands of applications/recertifications disrupted people's ability to access benefits.
 - This backlog dragged on into February 2024.
 - Alaska received several warnings from the federal government that they must eliminate the backlog or lose funding.
- Rural communities are disproportionately impacted due to their astronomical prices for groceries.

SNAP RECERTIFICATION

- As of 2023, Alaska had one of the shortest SNAP certification periods in the country.
 - Certification period was 6 months.
- Federal law allows states to certify applicants for up to 24 months if elderly or disabled, 12 months for everyone else.
- SNAP recertification is a significant administrative burden.
 - Division of Public Assistance must do interviews to confirm that applicants still meet income/asset limits, disability status, employment status, etc.
- Recently, Alaska's SNAP recertification period has been increased, but only through regulation and could be switched back.

HOUSE BILL 198

- House Bill 198 simply puts into statute that each SNAP-eligible household will be certified for the longest period permitted under federal law (currently 12 months).
- This will reduce the paperwork burden and costs for the Division of Public Assistance and will help prevent future SNAP backlogs.
- SNAP backlogs put Alaska at risk of losing federal funding and cause many Alaskans to go hungry.
- DPA is currently doing this as of very recently – we just want to put this regulatory change into statute to reduce the chances of this happening again.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- HB 198 is a simple, zero-fiscal note bill that codifies current practice at DPA.
- Had HB 198 been in place in 2022, the backlog would have been mitigated.
- HB 198 will help Alaska save costs in administrative red tape and prevents Alaska from losing necessary federal funds.



QUESTIONS?

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